

THE MINISTRY OF TOUCH IN THE NEW TESTAMENT
APPLIED IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

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In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Ministry

by
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DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

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a visit with a woman who couldn't talk but who could feel:

and mrs. jones is still depressed, oh no, i still haven't seen her, shall i do it now, what will i say, i'm afraid, i don't want to do it but i do want to do it but it's hard, but then there's the room and i'm in it, now what, mrs. jones, i'm the chaplain, i wanted to let you know that i'm thinking of you, but why didn't i think of you sooner, i take your hand, i don't speak you don't speak we don't have to, is that a smile or is it pain, it hurts a lot, the tears, you get up, your mouth moves with the sound of pain fear loneliness, you're not alone, no words come from the muted throat but the hand squeezes mine, we have communicated, i have the pain, i'm alone afraid inadequate but the hands still touch and i stay, i look i look away, the cry again, we talk with our hands but what do we say, if only you could talk but you can't and i would feel better but i don't, what am i doing here with my talking mouth that doesn't know this soundless pain, i want to leave but my hand stays and i stay with it, the smile again or is it pain, the head shakes no the head shakes yes, is it yes to me, how badly i want to be accepted but the words don't come to save me, only the mouth of smile or pain, the head-shake of no or yes, and the hand, oh yes the hand that finally squeezed, you gave me that what did i give you, sounds from my mouth, fear from my soul and my hand, it squeezed too, could you hear it above my absence my fear my wandering eyes, i'm going i'll be back, i'm gone with my body but you haven't let me leave, you stay with me now in the silent tears of my thoughts that don't forget and my feelings that still feel, i break the silence with this paper that had to be because i had to cry but i couldn't let my eyes speak but my thoughts cry for me, i left you you didn't leave me i'll be back to speak again with our hands, the hands that squeeze and feel and tell more than the silent words i want but can't have . . .

David C. Myler, Jr.

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ABSTRACT

Every word which we receive from the mouth of God is a gift given to us in order that we might pass it on within the Body and within the world. A capacity for tenderness is one of the foremost of such gifts. Through this understanding of God's power equipping us for inner wholeness and a sharing of his tenderness, we begin to see the Incarnate Christ in a profoundly simple new dimension of daily life.

Christ has no hands but our hands, no arms to hold another in a tender healing caress save our own. With the announcement of his departure from his disciples presence, Jesus admonished them,

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.
(John 13:34-35)

This admonition is as relevant to today's church as it was to only the twelve. As was seen in Chapter 2, Jesus' life, ministry and teaching are consistent with the final instructions he left to those who would become the church. Beliefs, words and actions must be consistent if their source is from God. From that foundation, our touch becomes the extension of Christ's touch and thus a vehicle of healing, encouragement and heartfelt love.

INTRODUCTION

The hug that comforts, the arm around the shoulder that dissolves tension, the grip of a friendly hand, all are human gestures which have a far more profound effect on the individual Christian's ability to minister than most of us realize.

Science has proven that the need for physical contact with one another is innate, not learned. Dr. Eric Berne,¹ a world famous psychotherapist finds in human kind innate needs, or hungers which he calls stimulus of sensation and recognition hungers. These hungers are the reason why prisoners will do almost anything to avoid solitary confinement and why milk is not enough for the well being of infants without the warmth and touch of mothering.

Christ ministered freely, in every mode available to him. He taught, he fed, he loved, he touched. Touching was an intimate part of Christ's ministry and of the ministries of those who followed after him. Jesus kissed, embraced, washed and held people freely. He took little notice of the station, sex, or cleanliness of that person. They were all people with needs and his human contact with them helped to meet their needs.

¹Eric Berne, What Do You Say After You Say Hello? (New York: Grove Press, 1972), pp. 21-25.

Society today is greatly afraid of touching. Our American society associates almost all touching with sexuality. Many of the tender nonsexual affections which can be transmitted by touching (as did Christ) are buried today. It is the exception rather than the rule for someone to freely appreciate touching. Few today would agree with Helen Keller as she exclaimed that, "Paradise is attained by touch."²

For the individual Christian to be free of fear and inhibition in order to give physically as well as spiritually to those around him or her as Christ did, would bring growth and new joyful effectiveness into the church.³ This is a matter of choice for the Christian and a matter of teaching for the church.

To overcome our fears for the sake of a more intense and successful ministry to the needs around us, will require growth on the part of each individual. That growth can be measured by the "development of honest, realistic attitudes -- not a brutal frankness but a gracious loving acceptance."⁴ This includes not only an acceptance of those around us for simply what they are, but also an acceptance of ourselves -- in need of growth -- and searching for the ways to learn how to grow.

²Helen Keller, The Story of My Life (New York: Doubleday, 1954), p. 105.

³When referring to the church in this disseration, we refer to all believers and followers of Jesus who together constitute the Body of Christ.

⁴Raymond C. Stedman, "Body Life," Decision, (February 1972), 4.

All pain hurts and all growth is painful. It is never easy or painless to diametrically change those ideas and responses which have been taught since childhood, but we must keep striving toward that end if we are to effectively minister to and from the Body of Christ, as it was in the time of Christ.

Chapter 1

THE HUMAN NEED FOR TOUCH

(SCIENCE)

The need for touch is not found only in the human species. Through much observation and experimentation it has been proven that animals have a great dependence upon physical contact within their own kind.

In 1921 the anatomist, Frederick S. Hamnett of the Wistar Institute of Anatomy in Philadelphia, became interested in the effects of total removal of both the thyroid and parathyroid glands from albino rats.¹ For some rats, death was quick as expected, however, there were some whose lingering promoted further investigation.

It was found that these rats were taken from two separate colonies. The first was a normal one in which the rats were left to themselves except for purposes of hygiene or feeding. The second colony had been experimental in nature. These rats were constantly handled, petted and gentled. The gentled rats responded with friendliness and complete lack of neuromuscular tension or irritability.²

¹F. S. Hamnett, "Studies in the Thyroid Apparatus:I," American Journal of Physiology, LVI 56 (1921), 196-204.

²F. S. Hamnett, "Studies in the Thyroid Apparatus:V," Endocrinology, VI 6 (1922), 221-229.

Upon the removal of the thyroid and parathyroid glands, the difference in the death rate between the irritable and gentled rats was sixty-three per cent. Hamnett concluded that the:

stability of the nervous system induced in rats by gentling and petting produces in them a marked resistance to the loss of the parathyroid secretion. In excitable rats this loss usually results in death from acute parathyroid tetany in less than forty-eight hours.³

Further study at the Wistar Institute showed that the more test animals were handled, the better they performed in laboratory situations.

The very first way touch hunger is appeased in animals after birth is by the mother's licking. Rheingold has observed many species of dogs including cocker spaniel, beagle and shetland begin licking their young on the day of birth and continue until about the forty-second day.⁴

Turning to the primates, Phyllis Jay reports on Indian langurs observed in the field under natural conditions, that langur mothers lick their young from the hour of their birth. The same appears to be true of baboons under natural conditions. "Every few minutes she explores the newborn infant's body, parts its fur with her fingers, licks and nuzzles it."⁵

³Ibid.

⁴J. S. Rosenblatt and D. S. Lehrman, "Maternal Behavior in the Dog," Maternal Behavior in Mammals, (1961), 179-181.

⁵Phyllis Jay, "Mother--Infant Relations in Langurs," Maternal Behavior in Mammals, (1962), 286.

It would be easy to conjecture that because the human infant does not receive this type of tactile stimulation it does not need it. With this in mind, a number of research scientists have explored infant birth. C. M. Drillien,⁶ along with others concluded that one of the main reasons why humans do not lick and nuzzle their infants is due to the extensive and prolonged process of labor and birth which humans experience.

The short, intermittent stimulations of the skin over a prolonged period of time that are produced by the contractions of the uterus upon the body of the fetus thus appear to be perfectly designed to prepare it for post-natal functioning.⁷

One of Dr. Drillien's many reasons for his thinking is the evidence provided by precipitately born infants who have not received the normal amount of cutaneous stimulation. This occurs both in premature and caesarean delivered children. In such cases are found a much higher percentage of disturbances in the gastrointestinal, genitourinary, and respiratory functions.

If this were the end of such evidence, it would be fair and logical to conclude that cutaneous stimulation at birth is solely for physiological purposes and is therefore not adequate grounds to equate it with later tactile stimulation. With only this evidence, it would be fair to say

⁶C. M. Drillien, "Physical and Mental Handicap in the Prematurely Born," Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology of the British Empire, (1960), 721-728.

⁷Ashley Montagu, Touching: The Human Significance of the Skin (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971), p. 55.

that tactile stimulation serves only a physiological function without emotional relevance. Yet, this does not cover a total picture.

From the moment of birth on, scientists have shown a consistently displayed need to make physical contact with those to whom we feel an emotional attachment. In the case of infants, specific attachment is not even necessary. That need to touch and be touched can be seen as a primary human hunger.

Within the context of Transactional Analysis, this innate need to touch and be touched is called stroking hunger. We all have such hungers but as mentioned before they are at times most openly displayed in infancy. Muriel James and Dorothy Jongeward, human relations and communication consultants, find it said among transactional analysts that "If the infant is not stroked, his spinal cord shrivels up."

Infants who are neglected, ignored or for any reason do not experience enough touch, suffer mental and physical deterioration even to the point of death.⁸

The natural desire for and response to touch in Transactional Analysis is called positive stroking. It is this positive, loving response to a person which develops that individual's emotional health and simply maintains that person's sense of being alive. Without touch in infancy, that sense of being alive can be easily lost. When lost so early in life, it can spell death.

⁸Muriel James and Dorothy Jongeward, Born to Win (Menlo Park, California: Addison-Wesley, 1973), p. 45.

During the nineteenth century the mortality rate for babies in hospitals and institutions was exceedingly high. They seemed to suffer from a disease called marasmus, a Greek word meaning "wasting away" (today known as infantile atrophy or debility). As late as the second decade of the twentieth century, the death rate for institutional infants in the United States was almost 100 per cent!

Dr. Henry Dwight Chapin, a distinguished New York pediatrician, recognized the emotional starvation of the children in institutions and introduced into America the system of boarding babies out in private homes.

Around the same time Dr. Chapin was helping the problem of marasmus in America, Dr. Fritz Talbot of Boston was conducting research in Germany. While there, just before World War I, Dr. Talbot visited the Children's Clinic in Dusseldorf. He was shown the wards by Dr. Arthur Schossman, the director of the Clinic. The wards were very neat and clean, but what piqued Dr. Talbot's curiosity was the sight of a fat old woman who was carrying a very measly baby on her hip.

'Who's that?' inquired Dr. Talbot.

'Oh, that,' replied Schossman, 'is Old Anna. When we have done everything we can medically for a baby, and it is still not doing well, we turn it over to Old Anna, and she is always successful.'

⁹Montagu, p. 83.

At this time these enlightened doctors were all too few and far between.

It was not until after World War II, when studies were undertaken to discover the cause of marasmus, that it was found to occur quite often among babies in the "best" homes, hospitals, and institutions, among those babies apparently receiving the best and most careful physical attention. It became apparent that babies in the poorest homes, with a good mother, despite the lack of hygienic physical conditions often overcame the physical handicaps and flourished. What was wanting in the sterilized environment of the babies of the first class and was generously supplied to babies of the second class was mother love.¹⁰

By 1938, Bellevue Hospital in New York ordered all babies to be picked up and 'mothered' once every hour. In that one year the death rate fell from thirty-five per cent to less than ten per cent.

Re-education of mothers in today's society has convinced most that physical mothering is essential to the health of their children. Strangely, however, a large majority of American parents feel that once their child passes the infant stage, the need for touching is over forever. How can this be healthy? As children grow older they retain their humanness, capacity for growth, and emotion.

Montagu notes that the word touch comes originally from the old French 'touche' which he defines with the help of the Oxford English Dictionary as:

The action, or an act, of feeling something with the hand, etc. The operative word is feeling. Although touch is not itself an emotion, its sensory elements induce those neural, glandular, muscular, and mental

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 83-84.

changes which in combination we call an emotion. Hence touch is not experienced as a simple physical modality, as sensation, but affectively, as emotion. When we speak of being touched, especially by some act of beauty or sympathy, it is the state of being emotionally moved that we wish to describe. And when we describe someone as being 'touched to the quick,' it is another kind of emotion that we have in mind. The verb 'to touch' comes to mean to be sensitive to human feeling.

The experiences the infant undergoes in contact with his mother's body constitute his primary and basic means of communication, his first language, his first entering into touch with another human being, the origin of 'the human touch'.¹¹

As feelings and emotions are part of us from birth and remain with us until death, there may be room to reconsider our aversion to touching. We must learn to realize that touching another human being 'satisfies the profound creature need not to feel alone; that being touched by another human being satisfies the need to be desired as a physical presence.'¹²

The need for touch is innate, not learned although it can be unlearned. If unlearned, we have the responsibility to others and to ourselves to re-evaluate what has been taught before our generation and to relearn from those who knew the truth.

¹¹Ibid., p. 110.

¹²William H. Masters and Virginia E. Johnson, "Touching and Being Touched," Redbook, (October, 1972), 69.

Chapter 2

THE BIBLICAL ATTITUDE TOWARD TOUCHING

(GOD)

It is interesting to note the number of words employed in both Greek and Hebrew which refer to touching in one form or another. In the Old Testament, נָגַח (naga) means both to cause to touch and also to touch in coming upon something. It is in the latter sense that the largest utilization is found, surprisingly with a frequently negative connotation.¹

The Old Testament repeatedly uses נָגַח to stress what must not be touched or if touched, what one must do to rectify the misdemeanor. This can be seen in Numbers 4:15; 19:11 and 31:19 as well as numerous references throughout the Old Testament and most especially the Pentateuch.

Two other words, both used very infrequently should also be noted. נָשַׁח (nashaq), to touch tenderly or to kiss is used the least of all the Hebraic uses of touch. Second to נָשַׁח is רוּחַ (ruach), used in reference to a touch of refreshment as in Judges 16:9. From this it can be seen that

¹For a valuable discussion of the positive use of touch in the Old Testament see Johs Pederson, Israel: Its Life and Culture (London: Oxford University Press, 1926), I, 99-181 on "The Soul" and I, 182-212 on "Blessing".

the majority of thought concerning touching in the Old Testament, carries with it the connotation of refraining from touching that which might prove detrimental either in a physical or spiritual way.

The use of נִשְׁקָה , although occurring with less frequency than any of the others, plays an important role in Jewish Scripture. Kissing most commonly occurred between relatives. For example, Jacob kissed his uncle, Joseph his father, Moses his brother, and David his son.²

The kiss had several purposes. It was a way of greeting and expressing farewell. Thus we are told that when David and Johnathan met 'they kissed one another, and wept with one another.' (Samuel 14:33) Likewise we are told that when Naomi was planning to leave her daughters-in-law, Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her.' (Ruth 1:14)³

Kissing, as handled in the Old Testament, was also a way of communicating forgiveness. This can be seen in the patriarchal story of the twin brothers Jacob and Esau, alienated by deception and theft. After twenty years a reconciliation took place. "Esau, ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept." (Genesis 33:4) A similar renewal of fellowship involving a loving touch was between Joseph and his brothers who had sold him into slavery. "He kissed all his brothers and wept upon them; and after that his brothers talked with him." (Genesis 45:15)

²Genesis 29:13; 50:1; Exodus 4:27; II Samuel 14:33.

³William E. Phipps, "The Kiss of Love," Pastoral Psychology, XXIII (1972), 28.

It was Joseph's body language more than his reassuring words that convinced the frightened brothers that they were genuinely forgiven.⁴

In most instances in the Old Testament, affectionate intimacy such as kissing involved members of the same sex. On more rare occasions though, instances of such intimacy are noted between a man and woman with a sexual connotation. Jacob, upon his first sight of Rachel, kissed her. In the Song of Songs, the bride expresses her longing for the kiss of her bridegroom.

O that he would kiss me with the kisses of his mouth.
(Song of Songs 1:2)
The Bridegroom answers:
Your kisses are like the best wine that goes down
smoothly, gliding over lips and teeth. (Song of Songs
7:9)

The nonsexual aspects of touching as an affirmation, greeting, farewell or blessing as well as for other purposes are noted far more strongly and frequently in the New Testament. Although נִשְׁקָה (which again is the Hebrew word to mean a tender touch or kiss) is seen with less frequency in the Old Testament. In the Greek of the New Testament the exact opposite can be seen.

There are five words in the Greek of the New Testament which refer to different aspects of touching. First Θίγω (thigo) meaning to touch at arrival, as is found in Hebrews 11:28. Second is καταλῶ (katago) which is used when leading down to land as in Acts 27. Third, προδψαύω (prospsaue) means to touch lightly such as in Luke 11:46.

⁴Ibid.

The fourth, meaning, to feel or handle, is ψηλαφω (paelaphao) and is used in Hebrews 4:15. Last is that word which is used most frequently in the New Testament, and is the crux of this study. απτομαι (haptomai) means to touch, hold or embrace.⁵ It is this word which is used in reference to Christ's ministry, including both his touch of those around him and many desiring to touch him. απτομαι is used not only in reference to Christ specifically, but throughout the New Testament.

Physical contact was intimately associated with the ministry of Jesus and his disciples. The Gospels and Acts record some thirty separate incidents where body contact was an important element in establishing human relationships. This number does not include such things as eye contact and physical proximity. Eleven times physical intimacy is spoken of in the context of healing. Except for two instances - a woman touching Jesus' garment and Paul embracing Eutychus - the usual practice was to touch the sick person with the hand.⁶

Physical contact occurred in many other contexts in the New Testament beyond a specific physical healing. Nonetheless, an important ministry to the individual person and need was performed.

Matthew 17:1-8

And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain apart. And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his garments became white as light. And behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him. And Peter said to Jesus,

⁵Robert Young, Analytical Concordance to the Bible (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1958), pp. 995-996.

⁶Bernard Schalm, "Human Intimacy in Pastoral Counseling," Journal of Pastoral Care, XXVI (1972), 192-193.

"Lord, it is well that we are here; if you wish, I will make three booths here, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah." He was still speaking, when lo, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him." When the disciples heard this, they fell on their faces, and were filled with awe. But Jesus came and touched them, saying "Rise, and have no fear." And when they lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only.

In this passage, Jesus shows the healing power over fear of the human touch. The Greek word here is *απτομαι* (haptomai which implies a touch which tends to hold and even sometimes to cling). N. Turner observes:

This is not the same as handling or feeling (as if in search of something), as when Jesus invited the eleven to "handle" (*ψηλαφου*) him after the Resurrection (Luke 24:39). Much less it is the more casual brush of contact.⁷

It is not at all unlikely, therefore, that Jesus did more than merely prod the disciples out of their fear at the Transfiguration. The fear the disciples felt at this phenomenal sight must indeed have been paramount. For Jesus to embrace them as an act of reassurance is far from improbable.

Christ realized the power to overcome fear through the ministry of touch. There is nothing within the Scripture to lead one to believe that there was anything supernatural about his touch in the instance of the Transfiguration. Jesus, as the Son of God was Divine . . . Jesus as the son of man was a warm, generous, uninhibited, loving human being. Men that he loved were frightened. His human

⁷N. Turner, "Touch," in The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), IV, 675.

inclination, which he followed, was to embrace them in love to dispel their fears. Most important . . . it worked.

Frequently, throughout his ministry, the Gospels refer to Jesus touching and being touched by both men and women. It is nearly impossible to distinguish any notable difference between the two (if indeed any difference existed). Jesus freely moved among the people he knew and loved, touching and being touched by them.

John 20:11-17

But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb, and as she wept she stooped to look into the tomb; and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and one at the feet. They said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him." Saying this she turned around and saw Jesus standing, but she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom do you seek?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away." Jesus said to her "Mary." She turned and said to him in Hebrew "Rabboni!" (which means Teacher). Jesus said to her, "Do not hold me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brethren and say to them, I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God."

Archibald Robertson expresses an interesting idea concerning this passage, especially John 20:17 which is the verse most applicable to this study. Robertson finds in this verse, touch me no (me mou haptou) or as it is translated in the R.S.V., do not hold me, to be in the:

Present middle imperative in prohibition with genitive case, meaning "cease clinging to me" rather than "Do not touch me." Jesus allowed the women to take hold of his feet (ekratesan) and worship (prosekunesan) as we read in Matthew 28:29. The prohibition here reminds

Mary that the previous personal fellowship by sight, sound, and touch no longer exists and that the final state of glory was not yet begun. Jesus checks Mary's impulsive eagerness. For I am not yet ascended (oupogar anabebeka). Perfect active indicative. Jesus is here at all only because he has not yet gone home. He had said 16:7 that it was good for them that he should go to the Father when the Holy Spirit will come through whom they will have fellowship with the Father and Christ.⁸

Whether or not Mary actually succeeded in touching Jesus does not make half the comment on the human need and desire to touch as her immediate inclination implies. Mary recognized Jesus whom she loved and she desired to touch him.

Luke 7:44-49

"Do you see this woman? I entered your house, you gave me no water for my feet, but she has wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not ceased to kiss my feet. You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much; but he who is forgiven little, loves little." And he said to her, "Your sins are forgiven."

Touching and being touched nourishes the pleasure of being alive. It is one of the most profound and rewarding modes of personal expression. It is for this reason, that the sinful woman anointed Jesus' feet. To simply say she was sorry could have been genuine and deeply heartfelt, however, it would not have ministered to the spiritual and emotional needs of Jesus and herself as with a physical act and demonstration of love.

⁸Archibald T. Robertson, Word Pictures in the New Testament (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1932), IV, 312.

The Greek word for kiss found in this pericope is καταφιλεω (kataphileion).⁹ Translated, this word means to kiss fervently. Green defines it as to "kiss affectionately or to kiss with earnest gesture."¹⁰

From the text, Jesus' warm reception of this woman is evident. Not only was he pleased with the behavior of this woman but genuinely disappointed that no other had preceded her.

This woman's physical contact with Jesus ministered to him both spiritually and emotionally as well as physically. Neither of them were embarrassed in any way although many looking on were greatly disturbed by the scene. Neither desired or felt the need to make any apology for their actions, for both were fulfilling human needs in their lives and in that there was no sin.

Frequently the Gospels refer to Jesus touching and being touched by males and females. Jesus held that the ideal life involves 'becoming like children'. For children, tactile communication is important: to feel, hug, or kiss is at least as prominent a way of communicating as to talk.¹¹

Mark 10:13-16

And they were bringing children to him, that he might touch them; and the disciples rebuked them. But when Jesus saw it he was indignant, and said to them, "Let the children come to me, do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly, I say to you

⁹Used also in Matthew 26:49 and Acts 20:37.

¹⁰Thomas Sheldon Green, A Greek-English Lexicon to the Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974), p. 98.

¹¹Phipps, p. 29.

whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it." And he took them in his arms and blessed them, laying his hands upon them.¹²

In the Greek it can be seen that Jesus' indignation, ἀνανακτεω (aganakteo), was a 'violent irritation'.¹³ Jesus was not merely casually upset with his disciples, but rather, was deeply annoyed. Apparently, Jesus felt it vitally important for the children to come to him if they so desired. It also seemed of great importance for him to hold and touch them.¹⁴

From the text, a kind of fear can be sensed from Jesus concerning the disciples. It is as though he felt that by hindering the children, the disciples were indeed hurting themselves. In Jesus' opinion, it appears that the disciples were the ones misguided and not the children who were following their natural inclinations.

Jesus again tries to make this point clear to his disciples on their last night together. As Jesus washed his disciples' feet,¹⁵ he was again, for the last time in his earthly life, trying to teach them many things concerning their own humanity.

¹²See also Matthew 19:13-15 and Luke 18:15-17.

¹³Ethelbert W. Bullinger, A Critical Lexicon and Concordance to the English and Greek New Testament (London: Bagster, 1972), p. 412.

¹⁴Again, αἰτομαι (haptomai) is used stressing a holding, embracing touch beyond the superficial.

¹⁵John 13:5-9.

John 13:12-15

When he had washed their feet, and taken his garments, and resumed his place, he said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you."

Not only did their Lord give them an example of humility and service, but he gave that example physically. He instructed these rough, uneducated men with the touch of his hands. This indeed spoke far more loudly than did his words. Coupled with his words, Jesus' example in touching made his verbal teaching memorable.

Luke 15:13-14; 20-24

Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took his journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in loose living. And when he had spent everything, a great famine arose in that country, and he began to be in want.

And he arose and came to his father. But while he was yet at a distance, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' But the father said to his servants, 'Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet; and bring the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and make merry; for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' And they began to make merry.

Everything that Jesus said and did was free from apology, inhibition and fearful restraint. His teachings reflect this attitude. In his parable of the prodigal son, the boy is restored by the embrace and kiss of a forgiving father.

Natural physical responses, one to another were not elaborated upon by Jesus, just calmly accepted as the obvious and normal. This attitude was to continue with the Apostles.

Judging from the five exhortations to kiss fellow Christians in the New Testament letters, this was a common practice in the early church. Peter, in I Peter 5:14 calls it a 'kiss of love'.¹⁶ Paul often concluded his letters with encouragement to the believers and the request that they 'greet each other with a holy kiss'.¹⁷ The question arises as to what was really meant by a 'holy kiss'. Professor William E. Phipps of Davis and Elkins College concludes:

"Holy" is today associated with "spiritual" which, in turn, connotes something ethereal and non-physical. Does this mean that Paul did not sanction a tender physical touching? Also "holy" can mean that which is separate from the ordinary. Does "holy" kissing thus imply that kissing is defiling as commonly practiced? To answer either question in the affirmative would be to misunderstand Paul's use of terminology. The Apostle called the kiss "holy" (hagion) because it was to be exchanged by the "holy ones" (hagioi). By the term, hagioi, Paul referred to ordinary Christians who were far from undefiled. (cf., Romans 16:15; I Corinthians 16:1; Philippians 1:1). Thus he enjoined all Christians, male and female, to engage in the customary fraternal kiss.¹⁸

James Moffatt calls the 'holy kiss' a 'natural symbol of the intense family consciousness in Christendom'.¹⁹

¹⁶philema agapes

¹⁷Romans 16:15; I Corinthians 16:1; Philippians 1:1.

¹⁸Phipps, p. 29.

¹⁹James Moffatt, The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians (New York: Harper, 1938), p. 280.

Acts 20:36-38

And when he had spoken thus, he knelt down and prayed with them all. And they all wept and embraced Paul and kissed him, sorrowing most of all because of the word he had spoken, that they should see his face no more. And they brought him to the ship.

The leaders of the Ephesian church were for the most part Gentiles. It is for this reason that physical closeness within the early church cannot solely be attributed to an Hebraic heritage. To love the departing Apostle in a physical way was their instantaneous, natural response. Also important is the fact that Paul in no way discouraged these people. If anything, he encouraged their actions by his grateful acceptance of their love. On later occasions, Paul would mention his loneliness and longing for fellowship.²⁰ Within the context of the New Testament letters, there is no reason to suppose that the fellowship did not include warm physical contact with the believers.

²⁰Philippians 1:8; II Timothy 4:11.

Chapter 3

TOUCHING IN OUR AMERICAN SOCIETY

(HUMANKIND)

Before an examination of American 'touch' ideals, it may prove beneficial to bridge the gap of history between the New Testament and our century today.

Most recorded history in the realm of touching concerns itself with the kiss. In Chapter 2 apostolic approval of a 'holy kiss' was noted. By the second century, the kiss became a regular part of the Eucharist. Justin Martyr described the celebration:

We gree each other with a kiss. . . . When the president of the brethren has given thanks and the whole congregation has assented, those whom we call deacons give to each of those present a portion of the consecrated bread and wine and water.¹

William Phipps concludes that , "by incorporating the kiss in the liturgy it tended to become restricted to more formal occasions."² Phipps continues his historical investigation of the holy kiss with Tertullian. Writing around 200 A.D., Tertullian indicated that congregational prayers were to be ended with a kiss.³

¹Justin Martyr, Apology, 1, 65.

²William G. Phipps, "The Kiss of Love," Pastoral Psychology, XXIII (1972), 30.

³Tertullian, Of Orations, 18.

Inasmuch as kissing between the sexes was practiced, Tertullian advised Christian women from marrying pagans. He recognized that their husbands might grow suspicious on seeing their wives kiss Christian brothers.⁴

Bishop Cyprian drew an analogy between the behavior of believers and doves.

The Holy Spirit came as a dove . . . They (doves) pass their lives in mutual intercourse, marking their peace and concord with a kiss and fulfilling in every point the law of unanimity. The church should exhibit their innocence and practice their affection.⁵

Cyrial of Jerusalem also interprets the holy kiss in the apostolic vein. "This kiss is the sign that our souls are united, and that we banish all remembrance of injury."⁶

During that patristic era there were other church fathers who were embarrassed by the 'kiss of love' because they were fearful that it would lead to erotic excesses. The first to criticize the kiss was Athenagoras in the late second century. That apologist even thought that somewhere in Scripture there was a prohibition against kissing a second time because of finding the act enjoyable. He gravely warned: "The kiss, or rather the salutation, should be given with the greatest care; since, if it is defiled by the slightest evil thought, it excludes us from eternal life."⁷

In the same passage, Athenagoras claimed that true Christians despise sensual enjoyment and indulge in sexual intercourse solely for purposes of reproduction.

⁴Tertullian, To His Wife, 2, 4.

⁵Cyprian, Unity of the Catholic Church, 9.

⁶Cyril of Jerusalem, Catechesus, 23, 3.

⁷Athenagoras, A Plea Regarding Christians, 32-33, as quoted from Phipps, p. 30.

As time went on, others began to share the apprehension of Athenagoras. Clement of Alexandria complained:

There are those that do nothing but make the churches resound with kisses. . . . The shameless use of the kiss, which ought to be mystic, occasions foul suspicions and evil reports among the heathen. . . . Do you not know that spiders, merely by touching the mouth, afflict men with pain? And often kisses inject the poison of licentiousness. It is then very manifest to us that a kiss is not Christian love.⁸

By the fifth century, regulation began to close in on the previously enjoyed physical intimacies of the church. The Apostolic Constitution stated that "men give the men and women give the women the Lord's kiss."⁹

This stultifying restriction probably contributed to the discontinuance of what began as a spontaneous intimate exchange among all Christians. The strictures against kissing fit into Geoffrey May's assessment of the general tendency of early Christianity. He wrote: "Within a period of four centuries Christianity had exchanged its attitude of emotional expression to an attitude of emotional expression with total emotional suppression."¹⁰

Many of these views would grow and repeat themselves in the centuries which followed and not only within the bounds of the church. Society affects and is affected by the religious teaching it receives. Somehow in America today there is an especially strong attitude against interpersonal involvement and most especially against touching.

⁸Clement of Alexandria, The Instructor III, 81 and 12.

⁹Apostolic Constitution, 2, 57.

¹⁰Geoffrey May, Social Control of Sex Expression (London: 1930), p. 28, as quoted by Phipps, p. 31.

This is at least partly due to our misconceptions of morality.

In our American society, we have become strikingly afraid to touch one another. Pierre A. Coblence, President of the California Counseling Center in Los Angeles notes that:

Strangely, Americans generally tend to shirk from bodily contact. When a gentleman introduces his mate, she seldom extends her hand, as she would usually do in Europe. And in a European office, one shakes everyone's hand in greeting in the morning and again when he leaves for the day.¹¹

If Americans at times find even a simple handshake threatening, how much more do we shirk from a more intimate touch of genuine love or encouragement!

Dr. Jess Lair notes that Sidney Jourard, researching touch for Sense Relaxation by Gunther observed:

in a European city that when friends were talking to each other, they touched the other person a hundred times per hour. In the Midwest friends in conversation only touched each other three times per hour.¹²

Somehow, though, among people everywhere, but especially here in America, we find ourselves painfully inhibited about touching and being touched.

Reasons are not hard to find. The average American tends to think of bodily contact in terms of sex or combat -- both of which are prickly with cultural and psychological taboos. Our Puritan heritage leads many of us to disapprove of any touching as "sensual". Those who have created this invisible barrier have lost something important: the part touch plays in giving encouragement, expressing tenderness, showing emotional

¹¹Pierre A. Coblence, "What Makes American Marriage Different?" Marriage and Family Living, 56, 5, (May, 1974), 7.

¹²Jess Lair, "I Ain't Much, Baby - But I'm All I've Got" (New York: Doubleday, 1972), p. 127.

support. Touch is a crucial aspect of all human relationships. Yet, except in moments of extreme crisis, we often forget how to ask for - or to offer - this boon. We often forget for instance, how it can heal the wounds of a quarrel.¹³

When words fail, we tend to reach out physically. However, when physical contact is frowned upon by society what is left as a recourse? From childhood on, many have heard the incessant proclamation "Don't touch!"

Such parents cannot permit the spontaneous physical expression of feelings - the stroking, snuggling and enfolding movements with which almost all living creatures seek the warmth and reassurance that is virtually indistinguishable from life itself.¹⁴

In this way, many people, including many Christians, begin to construe that all touching is wrong. When the need to touch arises, that old "Don't touch!" alarm goes off full force and the need to reach out is suppressed. It is for this reason, that many relationships are never formed and even more that were once productive, but have broken, are never reconciled.

While a child is still too young to understand why, a father will decide that his little son or daughter is too old to be cuddled in his lap and for their mother to give them their baths would be out of the question. Masters and Johnson feel that this initial parental rejection of touch begins a kind of chain reaction which continues on from

¹³Norman M. Lobsenz, "The Loving Message in a Touch," Women's Day, (February, 1970), 132.

¹⁴William H. Masters and Virginia E. Johnson, "Touching and Being Touched," Redbook, (October, 1972), 67.

childhood into adult life.

Children learn to restrain the impulse to reach out to someone of the opposite sex.

As they grow older, the impulse to touch is expressed by teasing. This leads to scuffling and wrestling, which, although ostensibly in conflict, give boys and girls a chance to experience close physical contact.

Later the girls become the ones who say 'Don't touch me' engaging the lesson deeply ingrained in childhood: that sex is dirty, and touching means sex - so it's hands off. Reaching out which has already been sharply limited as a spontaneous way of expressing affection and solidarity, is now stripped of all significance except that of sexual provocation. Thus the use of touch as a natural, uncomplicated way to express goodwill or friendship is forfeited.

Further, at the age of sexual experimentation, girls are more inclined to let themselves be touched than to do the touching. This again is partly a result of cultural conditioning - passivity as the proper female role, and the deeply embedded feeling that sexual activity for her may be dishonorable. With the rationalization that the boy is the initiator, the aggressor, who must bear full responsibility for what takes place between them, she struggles to free herself from feelings of guilt or discomfort, to free herself from the tight, involuntary tensions of her body, to free herself to enjoy her natural, physical response to being touched.¹⁵

Thus, as sex (in the proper socially acceptable context) is the acceptable avenue of touching within our society, society may indeed be 'cutting off its nose to spite its face'. By adoring touch in every other area of life, in the long run, we may also stifle sexual expression and enjoyment beyond the sex act itself. A fear of such a prevailing attitude induced Marabel Morgan to write the following.

Sexual intercourse is an act of love, express your love by giving him (your husband) all you can give. A woman's

¹⁵Ibid., pp. 66-67.

hands should never be still when she is making love. By caressing tenderly, you assure him that he's touchable. Tell him 'I love you' with your hands.

Psychological test results reveal that infants who are not touched lovingly suffer emotional depravation as adults. This basic need to be loved touched and comforted continues throughout life, in your life and his. He depends on you to reassure him that he's desirable to you. He needs confidence in this area where he may be vulnerable.¹⁶

Unfortunately, few people as of yet can grasp such a concept. Many still think of touching exclusively as a means to an end - touching for the purpose of having intercourse:

a functional, wordless way to communicate a willingness, a wish or a demand to make love.

They have advanced past the adolescent notion of touch-as-trigger to the more sophisticated notion of touch-as-technique. In essence, they have adopted the philosophy of the how-to-do-it sex manuals. Sex becomes a skill that can be learned, and then applied wherever desired. Men and women are taught not how to touch another human being but how to manipulate another body.

This is a dead-end approach to the sexual relationship. Preoccupation with manipulative technique turns persons into objects, and touching is turned into the science of stimulation. Instead of a sharing of private emotions, sex then comes perilously close to being an exchange of impersonal services.¹⁷

This concept of touching is completely foreign to the way it was meant to be. There is a world of difference between meeting a biological need and meeting the spiritual and emotional needs of a total human being. Dr. Jess Lair has

¹⁶Marabel Morgan, The Total Woman (Patterson, New Jersey: Revell, 1973), p. 123.

¹⁷Masters and Johnson, p. 68.

recorded some of the fine results when people begin to differentiate the difference between touching and the sex act itself. From one of his students, Lair relates this story:

I have been very reserved almost to the point of not even being aware of my feelings. I can't put into words the power of the feeling when I've been 'touched'. My husband and I are beginning to use this idea and talk to each other about these inner feelings. Before we talked at each other never giving consideration to emotions. The real turn from walking backward into facing the world straight on was on Saturday.

I never wore a two-piece swimming suit because I hadn't accepted my physical part. This morning I made one and wore it to the garden. I was unaware John was coming to the garden. He slowly came up behind me.

John put his hand on my back and said, 'you have a beautiful body.'

And I said, 'Thank you, so do you.'

His eyes, his touch and his feeling communicated through me. For the first time I heard what he said and I believed him. It was a precious moment when we both realized how wonderful our inner feelings were.¹⁸

Many may feel that to open up physically and do what comes naturally will automatically lead to rampant promiscuity. With everyone freely touching everyone else, pretty soon everyone will be sleeping with everyone else. Dr. Lair has formulated some noteworthy ideas in this area.

It has been my experience that the women who are most sexual are the women who are truest to their husbands. I'm not saying that this woman who is very sexual can't on some occasion, slip. She can and possibly will if the conditions are difficult enough for her, but it has been my experience that she handles it a heck of a lot better. Her sex just bubbles out of her. And because she is free and open to her feelings, she is not so busy fighting it that it comes out kinky. And because it is

¹⁸Lair, p. 129.

bubbling out all over the place, she has no trouble drawing a line around a certain area of her sexual relationships and saying these are for me and my husband alone. But she doesn't automatically then turn all of other other dials every other time and every other occasion so everything else is turned off.¹⁹

With an inhibition free self, one is able to love both sexually and nonsexually with greater joy, freedom and fulfillment. Not only is that a freedom of our physical and emotional life, but it also helps to free our minds of defensiveness, fear and suspicion; destructive elements which form a vicious circle of greater and greater mistrust and self contained coldness.

There is a realm of touching above and beyond any sexual involvement whatsoever. Although there is a strong element of nonsexual touching of affirmation and love between unselfish lovers, this element can exist wholesomely outside of that relationship with the people around us. This realm of touching outside of sexual stimulation was meant for everyone to share without fear, but with joy, unashamed.

"Touch most often carries its own message. It can be asexual, used to represent personal attitudes or emotions, to give comfort, to reassure . . ."²⁰

One of the most meaningful experience in life is an intimate relationship with another human being. Because of the many fears we harbor so often, we in this country throw away the opportunities to experience very precious ministering relationships one with another.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 131.

²⁰ Ibid.

It is so unfortunate that Americans seem able to equate nothing but sexuality with the word intimacy. There is so very much more. James and Jongeward comment on the confusion Americans seem to experience over intimacy.

Intimacy is expressing the Natural Child feelings of warmth, tenderness, and closeness to others. Many people suffer from an inability to express such closeness. Maslow sees this as particularly true of Americans. He feels Americans need so many more therapists than the rest of the world needs because they just don't know how to be intimate - that they have no intimate friendships, by comparison with the Europeans and that, therefore, they really have no deep friends to unburden themselves to.²¹

A woman mentioned an instance to Dr. Lair, of seeing a friend of hers very upset during a nervous breakdown. She wanted to reach out and hold her friend and finally was able to. She said, "I will never forget the magnificent sensual and almost supernatural feeling of holding her. I feel I benefited from it more than my friend."²²

More and more, as this woman realizes how healthy, normal and healing such actions are, to touch will become a natural unpremeditated response.

We need to seek the freedom within ourselves to reach out and touch those in need of ministry. Christ felt this need. It is the most natural thing in the world. Further, more people must be equally willing to allow themselves to be touched by others as to touch.

²¹Muriel James and Dorothy Jongeward, Born to Win (Menlo Park, California: Addison-Wesley, 1973), p. 266.

²²Lair, p. 128.

To explain exactly why these needs are so ever present in each one of us, there is no all encompassing explanation. If anything, only a broader listing of scientific facts could be documented such as found in Chapter 1. Suffice to say, God created us with the innate needs, which when met, show remarkable results.

In asking for and in giving forgiveness for example, nothing speaks more loudly, clearly or lovingly than the human touch.

Norman M. Lobsenz²³ relates a story about a family concerned about their teenage son's rebelliousness. They consulted a psychiatrist who spent weeks trying to restore communication between the emotionally estranged boy and his father. One day, the father suddenly got up and embraced his son. The boy hugged back and both began to cry. "It's the first time you've held me since I was a child," the boy said.

If only that father had done that years earlier, estrangement between father and son might have never occurred. Those that hold the leadership roles must be first to step out and touch. That boy probably would never have had the courage to approach his father. The father reached out his hands freeing his son to openly respond to his love. One has to be first to break down the wall of fear or it will remain untouched and the victim of that fear will remain unhealed.

²³Lobsenz, p. 132.

So often in communication with the medical profession it is heard that, cancer, heart disease or other ailments are the great cripplers and killers of the American people. However, it can often be proved that fear should well be placed at the top of such a list. Fear and the anticipation of things feared, can build a wall which makes recovery, either physically and/or emotionally extremely difficult. Dr. Lair finds this true to a great extent. One of his students, a nurse, relates how she has learned to cope with the problem of fear in her patients:

I started touching all my patients constantly. I held their hands, patted their shoulders, hugged them, even kissed a few. Right away there was a change on my floor. My patients were less confused and they needed less medication.²⁴

Touching is a vitally important part of really communicating with other people. When this is not realized, we can far more easily fool ourselves about the level and depth of our communication. We can also fool ourselves about the level of our satisfaction. Many today feel they have sexual satisfaction and yet do not feel personally satisfied. When this lack of satisfaction creates enough pressure, a series of sexual experiences may be sought ending in disappointment and dismay. It is that asexual, interpersonal touching that is unknowingly sought by so many. In the search, people seek tactile stimulation and satisfaction anywhere they can find it.

A magazine which specializes in men's interests, recently published an article on the subject of legitimate

²⁴Lair, p. 127.

massage establishments. Some of their conclusions proved to be very instructive.

Most of us are hung up about being touched so we turn to barbers, doctors and masseurs to satisfy our "touch hunger". Society has set up rules for touching. If someone gets into an elevator and stands too close, we move away slightly. If the elevator is crowded, we become rigid because the people around us aren't licensed to touch.

Past a certain age, fewer forms of touching are available to men: tousling the hair; a light, friendly punch on the arm - that's about all.

Men also have a greater touch hunger because, when courting, a man can touch a woman, but only when the woman is more mature can she return the touch. If you watch a man with a dog, he will spend lots of time petting the animal and scratching his ears. This is a projection of touch hunger. Men need massage more because they do have a greater touch hunger and are inhibited from touching other men. The touch hunger continues throughout your lifetime. In our culture we teach children to sleep alone whereas animals curl up and cuddle together, and children in most other cultures sleep together.

We communicate in a variety of ways through touch. A harsh touch means keep away; a soft touch means "I like you". Many women desire sex more for cuddling than for the act of sex. For men, it's difficult to go to a masseur just for a massage because they've been taught to fear touching. They need it, but they're afraid of it. Turning the massage parlor into a brothel will hinder men further from satisfying their touch hunger because it will become associated with a "dirty" act.²⁵

And so at massage parlors, the doctor's office, the beauty shop, people seek out those who are 'licensed to touch'. Willing to pay at times great sums of money for these services, people diligently seek them out. All the while they continue to maintain their social vigilance lest

²⁵Dr. Joyce Brothers as quoted by George Mazzei, "The Class of Touch," GQ - Gentlemen's Quarterly, (September, 1974), 71.

they slip and reach out toward some 'unlicensed' personage.

This only proves a point eloquently made by the famed English scholar and writer Desmond Morris.

It has sometimes been said that if only all the tight-lipped defenders of public morals would embrace one another lovingly, caress one another's faces, and kiss one another's cheeks, they might suddenly feel it was time to go home and leave the rest of society to go about its friendly, loving business without having to endure their desperate envy. But it is pointless to despise them, for society stitches its own straitjacket. The teeming zoo in which we live is not the ideal setting for public intimacies. It suffers from people pollution; we bump into one another and apologize, when we should be reaching out to touch; we collide headlong curse, when we should be embracing and laughing. There are strangers everywhere and so we hold ourselves back. There seems to be no alternative. Our only compensation is to indulge more heavily in private intimacies, but this we frequently fail to do. It seems as if our public restraint can spread to infect our conduct even in the bosom of our families. For many, the solution is to indulge in second-hand intimacies by spending the evening hours avidly watching the abandoned touchings and embracings of the professionals on our television or cinema screens, listening to endless words of love in our popular songs or reading them in our novels and magazines.²⁶

It can be seen from all of this, person's tremendous touch hunger and the benefits of fulfilling that hunger. It can also be seen that only those 'licensed to touch' seemingly have much opportunity to minister in a physical capacity, on a constant basis. The question then arises as to the role of the pastor in modern society. How broad is his/her license to touch? Does he/she have any license at all? If he/she does, why isn't he/she using it? If he/she doesn't, what are his/her obligations? Indeed, what is the pastor's sphere of ministry?

²⁶Desmond Morris, Intimate Behavior (New York: Random House, 1971), p. 143.

Chapter 4

THE CHURCH'S ROLE IN TOUCHING

(THE CHURCH)

The history of Christianity shows a drift toward minimizing personal encounter. Emotional ardor has been largely displaced by a passionless propriety. The theme of much of church history is "carnival" in its Latin meaning: "farewell to flesh". Ironically, in the name of the Incarnate One, modes of enfleshment of the Christian spirit have been banned. Somewhere along the way the unfeeling, Unmoved Mover of Aristotle has tended to take precedence over the Moved Mover of the Gospel as the symbol of perfection.¹

Today pastors as well as Christians in general, (the two are, as concerns the need to touch and be touched, synonymous terms) do not have the same 'license to touch' as do some other professional people. It appears that those with the broadest license are those in whose job touching is imperative. For the pastor, the majority of people expect him/her to be an academic wonder ministering from afar.

While physical contact with patients on the part of a physician is unavoidable and, at times essential, ministers generally shun physical intimacy with their clients. They have been trained to place almost exclusive emphasis on intellectual and emotional relationships. Western culture has reinforced this stance by associating physical intimacy with sex. If two men, for example, were seen holding hands in public they would arouse considerable attention. By contrast, holding hands among men who are closely befriended is quite common in Africa.²

¹William E. Phipps, "The Kiss of Love," Pastoral Psychology, XXIII (1972), 32.

²Bernard Schalm, "Human Intimacy in Pastoral Counseling," Journal of Pastoral Care, XXVI (1972), 193.

The public attention which physical familiarity draws in this country is a real problem for the pastor. Even the most innocent physical contact can cause whispers of suspicion. Dr. Lair a prominent professor experiences misinterpretations of his actions quite often, and the role of professors is not too far removed from that of a ministering Christian.

One of my students told of an example. A friend of his has seen me walking down the hall of our office building with my arm around the shoulder of one of my old beat-up fellow professors. He asked my student if I was a homosexual. My student said he didn't know. But my student added, 'A few days later you told us about touching and I felt like a big turd. Here I had just blindly accepted my friend's condemnation of you based on our stereotyped morality.'

Something like this is frightening. But the alternative is to walk away from the idea of touching people and the consequences of that are even more frightening to me.³

There is no easy, foolproof answer to this complex problem. There is no new computer card which can be plugged in with the expectation of an answer arriving forthwith.

One thing that is certain is that the answer lies within the individual, as that individual relates to others. And in striving toward that new and greater goal of physical freedom, there is a joy of accomplishment to be found.

Touch is a crucial part of our communication, but it is still just a part. And all we can communicate is what we are at the moment. Usually when there is a deficiency in communication, I feel it comes from not being deeply enough rather than from not communicating what we are.

³Jess Lair, "I Ain't Much, Baby - But I'm All I've Got" (New York: Doubleday, 1972), p. 128.

While I believe in the deep potentialities that lie in all of us, it is very hard to develop those potentialities. It is a long, hard struggle and we never reach our goal. We just move toward it. I don't understand the person who says, 'If I could just release everything in me, I'd be great today.' I don't think it's that easy. I don't think living is a natural, easy thing with us that we had as children but that was beaten out of us by our society. Our particular environment may have hindered or aided our development. But what I'm talking about is a life-long process of struggle to find what's easy and right and natural for us. I know it's a contradiction to talk about the struggle to find what's easy and natural, but it's the only way I can find to say how I feel and think.

In everything, I see the people I respect moving slowly and patiently. So with touch.⁴

The Christian community is beginning to recognize this truth ever so slowly. For those who do recognize it and are ready and willing to take a chance, there is the reward of a more fruitful ministry awaiting them.

One of my students was a minister. He started touching people more and he said he could see a big difference. He could talk so much more personally and directly when he was touching people. He found this especially true on his sick calls. He had one old patient who was alone and dying. After he started touching her, she clung to him like he was life itself.⁵

As in all innovative concepts, discretion is indeed the better part of valor. Just because touching has been proven needed and successful when used lovingly, it poses a great threat to a society which has proven to be greatly afraid of physical contact. Forcing an idea down the throat of society or the church (even though accepting that idea would be in their best interests) would only cause flat rejection.

⁴Ibid., p. 131.

⁵Ibid., p. 128.

This can be seen in some of the 'experimental churches' where touching is insisted upon to 'bring people closer together.'⁶ These people more often than not soon leave such churches to return to the more conventional, perhaps a bit austere, yet safe church. We don't need to rip out pews and throw away beautiful liturgies to make people touch each other. This must be a slow, loving process of re-education of society in general and more especially the church. The effect the church has on the overall opinion of society concerning particular matters is marked. If we as Christians can first get our house in order, we will be better equipped to cope with the needs of society. When we are able to make Christianity a more human, down to earth, practical faith, not only will society's attitudes to touching and their general humanness improve, but very possibly it would draw people from that society into a more New Testament oriented, practically ministering church.

If Christians would revive the New Testament emphasis on the touch we might have a more authentic sense of personal communion. Bodily emotion is inseparable from love, the central theme of the Christian religion. Tactile encounters often afford the most apt analogy for expressing this highest quality of divine revelation and of human aspiration. For example, the experience of love has been described in this way: 'It's like crawling out of an old tough calloused skin that has always protected and letting another human being touch me on the new inner skin that's so sensitive and close to my inside.'⁷

⁶Jane Howard, Please Touch (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1970), pp. 212-225. "Pews Keep People Apart".

⁷T. S. Greene, Modern Man in Search of Manhood (New York: 1967), p. 111, as quoted by Phipps, p. 32.

Never was the promise made that this would be a painless or easy task. As a stepping stone, the following are some suggestions and cautions on how to be more physically at ease with people and how to become more physically loving without being threatening or offensive.

Discuss the idea with your family first. "Don't just suddenly and singly become a 'toucher'." says psychiatrist Dr. Alexander Lowen. "Nothing is more upsetting than an unexpected and unexplained change in another person's behavior."

Begin by performing simple acts of physical contact that are customary in some, but far from all, families: kissing good night or good morning; hugging when greeting or saying farewell.

Learn to discern when others are in a mood to be touched; otherwise physical contact can be irritating. Children often go through stages of rejecting a parent's touch.

Be emotionally honest when you do touch. Dr. Nicholas Dellis, a New York psychologist, told me that once, when he was extremely busy, his daughter came to him seeking attention. "I put my arm around her, but my mind was on my own problems. She sense at once that I was not emotionally with her. She said, "You're holding me away from you." I looked, and the arm I had around her shoulder actually was forcing her apart from me rather than bringing us together."

Try to make the act of touch a source of comfort and reassurance, rather than a veiled demand. Touch should never be a vehicle for clinging to or possessing another person.

Realize that touching does not always have a sexual connotation. Many of us have failed to learn that different kinds of touching, meaning different things, are possible.

Dr. Herbert A. Otto, a pioneer in the search for ways to foster personal growth and expand human potential, believes that much more takes place through touch than most of us realize. It can, he says, almost mechanically dissolve barriers between people. It can break down the emotional walls we build within ourselves. 'Touch',

says Dr. Otto, 'is always an exchange, if not a sharing. Through touch we grow, and we enable others to grow.'⁸

It might well be helpful at this point to take these guidelines and apply them to a model for Christian community life. Although the total number of Christians in the world are all part of the Body of Christ and thus share in the life of that community, to create a workable model for ministering touching within Christian community the beginning must take place at the root.

Christian community begins with the nuclear family living in love under the sovereignty of Christ. This family may or may not be called to extend itself to include other believers to enter into the life of that household. In any event these guidelines can be applied to the lifestyle of that community both concerning touching in particular and interpersonal relationships in general.

Honesty and sensitivity are the focal points for each of Lobsenz' seven guidelines. He first cautions that within community, growth and change of the individual must be a shared experience if that change is going to provide a source of edification rather than division. There is nothing ridiculous about sitting down with the people with whom you live and sharing the sense of need to touch and be touched more lovingly and more often.

⁸Norman M. Lobsenz, "The Loving Message in a Touch," Women's Day, (February, 1970), 134.

James P. Madden, the spiritual director of the House of Affirmation which is a community whose main apostolate is ministry to the loneliness experienced by religious and clergy, defines loneliness as a "loss of linkage"⁹ with persons or the world. One of the most effective ways the House of Affirmation has found for ministering to the needs of the lonely is through touch and the encouragement of increased intimacy. This is, in their experience, best begun through honest, open discussion about the needs of each member of the household and coming to new and deeper commitments to try and meet those needs for one another.

This leads to Lobsenz' second and third guidelines to begin small and let growth take place in slow and gentle ways. It is a great human weakness to get a mental image which illustrates one's ultimate expectation and from that image allow immediate results to be fully anticipated. One of the greatest joys and yet deepest hardships of life in Christian community is learning to grow and live with one another. If that task were finished before it was begun, the joy and purpose of community life would be automatically negated.

One of the most helpful attributes in aiding this process is certainly sensitivity -- that selfless extension of self which allows one to feel the joys and the apprehension

⁹James P. Madden, Loneliness: Issues of Emotional Living in An Age of Stress for Clergy & Religious (Whitensville: Affirmation Books, 1977), p. 80.

of those with whom one lives. The gift of love, be it given in a verbal or physical manner, has efficacy only as it is received. Reception of affection must be natural and not forced. Thus if we are willing to give our love with the understanding that the one to whom it is directed may not be able at that moment to receive it, the hurt will not be so great and there will not be that dangerous sense of personal rejection. If the one to whom our touch is given withdraws either in an interior or exterior way, the opportunity is then present to give a second gift which is to make no demand for response and assume no personal injury. As our Lord showed us, the same gift often must be given many, many times until the point of confident acceptance can be reached. This requires patience and patience requires God's grace.

Returning once more to the important issue of honesty, James Madden has an important insight to shed greater light on Lobsenz' fourth directive of correlation between one's intent and action. Madden feels very keenly that, "our self concept is not formed from introspection, but from introjection."¹⁰ What we give of ourselves is one of the foremost influences upon what we become. There is nothing wrong with experimentation when done with a sincere desire to minister and to grow. We learn by responding one to another. Feedback is a gift; to share what is helpful and hurtful in the actions of another is to help that person learn how

¹⁰Ibid., p. 85.

better to love and grow in the relationship.

Being is far more crucial than action in the final analysis. True honesty flows forth from our inmost being. It is impossible to live a lie within community and also find joy. Lobsenz recognizes this fact in his fifth guideline for touching in which he warns of the very real danger of using touch to disguise demands which we wish to make upon the rest of the community. Love (and touching is a part of love) is a gift not an expectation or demand. There are times when we can make demands through actions of love without being fully aware of what we are doing. This is, at least in part, due to the inordinate need we may feel ourselves which dedication to honesty has not yet prompted us to recognize or share.

Circumventive pleas for affection are not only dishonest and unrealistic, but they can often times be extremely dangerous and damaging both to individuals and to the life of the community. If we are not honest with the way we are seeking affection, it can well be easy to have a blurred vision of the motivation behind that desire. William E. Hulme in his helpful book Creative Loneliness affirms (as do countless others) that touch as a sign of and vehicle for intimacy need not be inhibited by fear of sexual intimations.¹¹ If within ourselves and within the life and structure of the community in which we live and to which we are

¹¹William E. Hulme, Creative Loneliness (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1977), p. 79.

dedicated, honesty is the pivotal point of life; there need be discretion certainly but fear never. To call another brother or sister dishonestly will lead to certain destruction. To be able to use those words and mean them in our speech and in our actions is to provide the foundation for the deepest possible intimate interrelatedness which is the framework within which God's Holy Spirit moves most freely and powerfully.

Above all else, it must be remembered that our faith in God is essential to our faith in people.¹² It is impossible to have a deep and passionate love of God and a heart filled with hate and suspicion toward humankind. Most particularly, it is essential within the individual community in which we live to trust God's guidance and presence in spouse, children, brothers and sisters. God is teaching, ministering to and disciplining each member of the community. No one within the house has a monopoly on the truth. As I gain a new perspective on touching (or any area of loving ministry) I have gained neither superiority nor authority to demand certain changes or responses from my brothers and sisters.

Every word which we receive from the mouth of God is a gift given to us in order that we might pass it on within the Body and within the world. A capacity for tenderness is one of the foremost of such gifts. Through this under-

¹²Ibid., p. 90.

standing of God's power equipping us for inner wholeness and a sharing of His tenderness, we begin to see the Incarnate Christ in a profoundly simple dimension of daily life.

Christ has no hands but our hands, no arms to hold another in a tender healing caress save our own. With the announcement of his departure from his disciples presence, Jesus admonished them,

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.
(John 13:34-35)

This admonition is as relevant to today's church as it was to only the twelve. As was seen in Chapter 2, Jesus' life, ministry and teaching are consistent with the final instructions he left to those who would become the church. Beliefs, words and actions must be consistent if their source is from God. From that foundation, our touch becomes the extension of Christ's touch and thus a vehicle of healing, encouragement and heartfelt love.

Dignity and Dehumanizing

I'd help make you feel more worth while,
if I didn't feel so worthless myself.
It would be good to let you know I care about you
if I wasn't worrying about how you
or others might interpret any intentions.
You've really got a lot of talent which I'd
like to see you discover and develop
except you might come out the
winner and I hate to lose,
Each time I see the possibility to help you
discover dignity in your life -
my need to dehumanize you gets
equally strong!

Duane Parker

Christ Our Model

Do nothing from selfishness or conceit, but in humility count others better than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which you have in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Philippians 2:3-11

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OUTLINE

Thesis: For the individual Christian to be free of fear and inhibition in order to give physically as well as spiritually to those around him/her as Christ did, would bring growth and new joyful effectiveness into the church. This is a matter of choice for the Christian, and a matter of teaching for the church.

I. The Human Need for Touch - Scientific Documentation

A. In animals

1. animal experimentation
 - a. gentled vs. unattended rats
 - b. dogs, langurs, primates

B. Contrast of human infant

1. birth process and tactile stimulation
2. premature vs. normal birth

C. Exploration of human infant needs

1. Transactional Analysis - stroking hunger
2. history of marasmus
3. the need for touch is innate, not learned.

II. Biblical Attitude Toward Touching

A. Brief study of Testamental words for 'touch'

1. Hebrew
 - a. נָגַח (naga)
 - b. נָשָׂא (nashaq)
 - c. רָחַץ (ruach)
2. Greek
 - a. θίγω (thigo)
 - b. καταλῶ (katago)
 - c. προσψανῶ (prospasano)
 - d. ψηλαφῶ (paelaphao)
 - e. ἀπτομαί (haptomai)

B. Specific passage examined in light of haptomai

1. Matthew 17:18-8
2. John 20:11-17
3. Luke 7:44-49
4. Mark 10:13-16
5. John 13:12-15
6. Luke 15:13-14; 20-24
7. Acts 20:36-38

III. Touching in Our American Society

A. Brief historical scan to present

1. touching in the early church
2. the 'holy kiss'

B. Progression toward association of touching and sex exclusively

1. our children taught not to touch
2. society becomes so touch resistant, every aspect of life is affected
3. there is a realm of nonsexual physical contact
4. people go to great lengths to seek this realm
5. those who risk touching discover wonderful new feelings and attitudes.

IV. The Church's Role in Touching

- A. The pastor and Christians are not 'licensed to touch'
 1. the majority of ministering is done on an intellectual basis alone
 2. people can misconstrue when one tries to touch
- B. Touch as a normal and necessary part of our communication
 1. a few Christians are beginning to minister more physically with good results
 2. the matter cannot be forced however
 3. re-education must be slow and loving
 4. suggestions and cautions on how to be more physically loving without being offensive
- C. Examination of Lobsenz' directives in individual Christian communities for positive touching
 1. honesty and sensitivity are focal points
 2. time and tenderness must be provided
 3. what we give of ourselves in one of the foremost influences upon what we become
 4. touch need not be inhibited by fear of sexual intimations
 5. faith in God is essential to our faith in people